

March 4, 2003

To: Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, Chair
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: David E. Janssen
Chief Administrative Officer

**GRAND AVENUE REALIGNMENT PROJECT — STREET TREE REMOVAL
(ITEM NO. 90-E, AGENDA OF MARCH 4, 2003)**

On the March 4 agenda, we are recommending that your Board award a construction contract for the Grand Avenue Realignment Project. For this project to proceed and the roadway and sidewalk elements to be completed prior to the opening of the Walt Disney Concert Hall, the construction contract must be awarded on March 4.

Over the past six weeks, the City of Los Angeles Board of Public Works conducted four public hearings on the issuance of a street tree removal permit for the Grand Avenue Realignment Project. At the end of the last public hearing on February 28, 2003, the Board of Public Works determined that, since the City Council in November had adopted a resolution ceding jurisdiction of Grand Avenue in the project area to the County of Los Angeles, it had no jurisdiction over the street trees and that the persons objecting to the street tree removals should address their concerns to the County.

As a result, it is possible that persons objecting to the removal of the street trees along Grand Avenue, particularly those adjacent to the Music Center, may address your Board at the March 4 meeting.

The matter of the street tree removal was brought before the City Board of Public Works at the City's request, although the County had taken the position that the jurisdiction over the street trees should reside with the County. The City staff posted the trees as required in early October, but the City's street tree removal process ultimately did not stay synchronized with the other project approvals and came to the Board of Public Works after the City Council had

ceded jurisdiction over the roadway and executed the City-County agreement, which required the City to grant its approval of the street tree removal. This has understandably added to the frustration felt by the persons opposing the removal of the trees.

It was not until staff attended the first Board of Public Works meeting on January 17, 2003, after the project was designed and bids received, that the County became aware of any controversy surrounding the removal of the trees. As identified in the Environmental Impact Report for the project, which your Board certified on October 8, 2002, the project will remove 55 existing trees, 34 of which are within the current road right-of-way. No comments were received during the public review period of the Environmental Impact Report regarding the removal of the trees.

We continue to recommend the approval of the project, as designed and approved as part of the EIR, for the following reasons:

- The project includes the planting of 156 trees, 81 of which will be within the new road right-of way after construction. This is almost a 3:1 ratio, exceeding the City's own standard of a 2:1 ratio;
- As specified, the replacement trees are of a large size and consist of 108, 48-inch box canopy trees, 1 60-inch box Coral tree, 32 Washingtonia robusta palm trees with an 18 to 20-foot brown trunk height, and 15 10 to 12-foot King Palms;
- As recommended in the City of Los Angeles' street tree guidelines, the trees will be planted in large underground planter boxes with structured soil and drip irrigation systems that will optimize their ability to survive in the urban environment;
- The street trees on the east side of Grand Avenue in front of the Hall of Administration, Courthouse and Lot 17, would be within the lanes of the relocated Grand Avenue. The other trees being removed on the east side of the street consist of smaller trees that are directly impacted by the improvements. The large trees immediately adjacent to the Hall of Administration and Courthouse will remain and be protected during construction; and
- The street trees on the west side of Grand Avenue adjacent to the Music Center create an impediment to the pedestrian environment and disabled access and expose the City and the County to substantial potential liability. In most cases, the trees have resulted in the upheaval of the sidewalk surrounding the trees. Further the location of the trees so close to the Music Center facilities impacts the ability of the Music Center to program the facility, and especially the outdoor plaza.

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Given the damage that many of the existing trees have caused, we believe the removal and replanting of the trees as designed would be advisable even without the realignment of the roadway itself.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact me or your staff may contact Sharon Yonashiro of my staff at (213) 974-2273.

DEJ:SNY
JSE:KW:i/h

c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
 County Counsel
 Department of Public Works